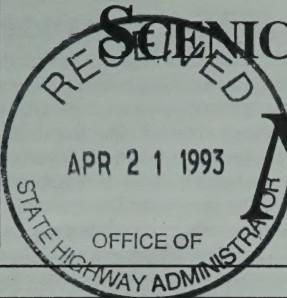


Volume 1 Number 2



Research Library

SCENIC NORTH CAROLINA NEWS

Spring 1993

92 Percent Prefer Logo Signs, Boy Scout Finds

Isaac Perkins wanted to know whether travelers on Interstate 40 near his Rose Hill home preferred to use billboards or small logo signs to find out about gas stations, restaurants, lodgings, and campgrounds, so he took matters into his own hands.

The Duplin County Boy Scout surveyed 200 travelers at an I-40 rest stop near Warsaw on two consecutive Sunday afternoons. His survey found that 92 percent preferred logo signs, 6½ percent favored billboards, and 1½ percent preferred neither.



Logo Sign

Despite the overwhelming popularity of logo signs with I-40 motorists, the N.C. Department of Transportation will wait until 1995 to place logo signs at I-40 exits between Raleigh and Wilmington.

Businesses along the route can now pay the full cost of having the logo signs installed, but the \$12,000 to \$18,000 price tag is prohibitive for many of the smaller businesses along I-40 in towns such as Rose Hill. In South Carolina, businesses pay only \$400 to have new logo signs installed.

Perkins' findings were presented

during a public hearing before the Rose Hill Town Council. Following the hearing, the council voted 4-1 to rezone two narrow strips of land along Interstate 40 to industrial, a classification that permits billboards under the

state's billboard regulations. Previously, the land was in a mixed-use classification that did not allow billboards but allowed industrial development if a special use permit is issued by the town.

Report Shows Taxpayers Subsidize Billboards

According to a report recently released by the N.C. Department of Transportation, permit fees paid by billboard companies last year did not even cover the state's cost of enforcing billboard regulations. Instead, taxpayers provided a \$130,000 subsidy to the billboard companies that place signs along North Carolina's major highways.

The report shows that permit fees covered only 68 percent of the costs of regulating billboards along Interstate and federal-aid primary highways in North Carolina. It cost \$410,277 to control billboards, while only \$280,889 was received in permit fees.

Rep. Marie Colton, D-Buncombe, told the *Hendersonville Times-News*, "The report proves that they were getting a pretty good free ride. The roads we build are a showcase that they can use to make

money practically for free."

An editorial in the *Wilmington Morning Star* added, "The real subsidy is the millions of dollars spent to build highways that create sites for billboards—profitable private parasites on public projects."

An annual permit for a billboard now costs \$30 in North Carolina. Department of Transportation officials are drawing up a proposal to raise the renewal fee to \$50. This increase will have to be approved by the General Assembly.

In a March 2 letter, Scenic North Carolina urged Transportation Secretary Sam Hunt to raise the fee to a level that will allow the state to enforce all regulations evenly and effectively. In a response, Hunt said that "we will continue to enforce all current regulations consistent with available resources."

Billboard Lobby Prepares Another Attack On Amortization in General Assembly

As *Scenic North Carolina News* went to press, the Billboard Lobby was preparing for another effort in the General Assembly to prohibit local governments from phasing out billboards, junkyards, and other non-conforming uses through amortization. For more information, call 919-832-3687.

We take stock of a city the way we take stock of a man. The clothes or appearance are the externals by which we judge. — Mark Twain

NCDOT Commits \$8.8 Million To ISTEA Enhancement Projects

The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) contains a new category of federal funds for transportation enhancement activities. These funds can be used for environmental and quality-of-life efforts related to transportation such as pedestrian and bicycle facilities, scenic easements, scenic byway programs, highway landscaping, historic preservation, preservation of abandoned railroad corridors, and control and removal of billboards. For 1993, North Carolina has been appropriated more than \$11 million dollars in transportation enhancement funds.

According to figures provided by the N.C. Department of Transportation in early March, more than \$8.8 million in federal enhancement funds have been spent or committed toward specific projects in North Carolina since the passage of ISTEA. Of the ten eligible enhancement categories, money has been spent in the following five areas: pedestrian and bicycle facilities (\$513,702), highway landscaping (\$3,977,124), historic preservation (\$2,500,000), rehabilitation of historic transportation buildings (\$1,856,000), and preservation of abandoned railway corridors (\$112,000).

The largest single expenditure of enhancement funds to date is the

\$3.9 million for highway landscaping. According to State Roadside Environmental Engineer Bill Johnson, these funds were divided up so that \$278,000 was spent for landscaping in each of the state's 14 highway divisions. The Board of Transportation member in each division worked with the Division Engineer and roadside environmental staff to decide how and where the money would be spent.

The most recent Transportation Improvement Program (TIP), the state's overall transportation plan for six years into the future, set aside \$2.5 million for removal of billboards and \$7 million for junkyard screening. To date, none of these funds have been spent.

At the TIP public hearings held in November and December of 1992, Scenic North Carolina asked NCDOT officials to meet with public interest groups, local government representatives, and state government agencies to define the criteria to be used in selecting enhancement projects. NCDOT officials were also asked to consider forming an advisory panel to provide input to the Board of Transportation on enhancement fund projects. Georgia, Florida, Pennsylvania, Maryland, Rhode Island, Kansas and other states have formed enhancement fund advisory panels.

Category	County	Amount	Description
Landscape	Statewide	\$3,897,124	.... Landscaping projects throughout the state
Preservation	Rowan	2,500,000	.... Renovations to Spencer Shops Transportation Museum
Rail Rehab	Nash, Edgecombe	1,400,000	.... Renovations to Rocky Mount rail station
Bicycle	Statewide	144,000	.... Preliminary engineering studies for statewide bicycle program
Pedestrian	Tyrrell	124,000	.... Pedestrian bridge over the Scuppernong River
Rail Rehab	Guilford	120,000	.... Renovations to High Point rail station
Rail-Trail	Lincoln, Catawba	112,000	.... Acquire 7-mile abandoned railroad corridor
Rail Rehab	Rowan	60,000	.... Renovations to Salisbury rail station
Rail Rehab	Johnston.....	48,000	.... Renovations to Selma rail station
Bicycle	Orange	40,000	.... Campus-wide bicycle parking at UNC-Chapel Hill
Landscape	Macon	40,000	.... Landscaping at the intersection of US 23/441 in Macon County
Landscape	Gaston	40,000	.... Landscaping along Airline Avenue in Gastonia
Pedestrian	Statewide	40,000	.... Pedestrian facility design guidelines
Rail Rehab	Guilford	40,000	.... Renovations to Greensboro rail station
Pedestrian	Statewide	32,000	.... Pedestrian program accident study
Rail Rehab	Wilson	32,000	.... Renovations to Wilson rail station
Bicycle	Wake	28,000	.... Campus-wide bicycle parking at N.C. State University
Bicycle	Wake	27,010	.... Bicycle route mapping in Wake County
Bicycle	Richmond	24,000	.... Signing and mapping bicycle routes throughout the county
Rail Rehab	Alamance	24,000	.... Renovations to Burlington rail station
Bicycle	Statewide	20,720	.... Signing and mapping of Piedmont Spur, NC 6 bicycle route
Rail Rehab	Richmond	20,000	.... Renovations to Hamlet rail station
Pedestrian	Statewide	14,400	.... Fund statewide pedestrian coordinator position
Bicycle	Statewide	8,800	.... Revise and reprint local bicycle route maps
Pedestrian	Forsyth.....	8,000	.... Construct pedestrian bridge over old U.S. 52 near Old Salem
Bicycle	Dare, Currituck	2,772	.... Signing of bicycle routes in Northern Outer Banks Area

NCDOT Creates Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program for Roadsides

The N.C. Department of Transportation has created a pilot program to improve the habitat for many small animal species that live alongside state roads. The N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission assisted NCDOT in developing the program.

The pilot program, located along Interstate 40 between Orange and New Hanover counties, includes reduced mowing behind the ditches in the selected project areas to provide more food and cover for wildlife. In addition, mowing heights and mowing schedules have been adjusted to better fit the needs of wildlife.

The habitat program is intended to help declining species such as the bobwhite quail, eastern meadowlark, cardinal, prairie warbler, and cottontail rabbit by contributing to their refuge near the roadside.

Care is being taken by NCDOT workers to develop wildlife cover in portions of the right-of-way away from the pavement and in areas where the driver's view is not obstructed. NCDOT is also avoiding larger plantings that will attract larger animal species.

Scenic North Carolina applauds this effort by state officials and supports the extension of program to other parts of the state.

NCDOT Slow to Carry Out 1990 Billboard Reforms

In January 1990, the N.C. Board of Transportation adopted a number of reforms to the state's billboard control program. However, NCDOT officials have been slow to take the actions needed to implement some of these reforms.

For instance, the Board of Transportation instructed NCDOT to hold extensive training sessions for field personnel who enforce billboard and tree-cutting regulations. After more than three years, this training has still not taken place.

The 1990 reforms were prompted by a series of articles that appeared in Raleigh's The News & Observer in January 1989. Then-State Highway Administrator George Wells, who admitted the state had been "lax" in

carrying out its responsibilities, appointed a task force which met for several months and made recommendations to the Board of Transportation.

Most of the reforms adopted by the Board of Transportation consisted of changes to state regulations. But for some reason it took 11 months for these regulations to become effective, even though the Board at that time had the power to make the regulations effective immediately.

When asked, NCDOT staff are unable to explain why it took so long for the regulations to become effective—other than to say that the rules were not presented to the Board of Transportation in the proper form. Since the Board makes changes to regulations on a

regular basis, it is difficult to understand how this process could have been botched.

Because it took 11 months for the regulations to become effective, billboard companies were allowed to operate under the old rules until December 1, 1990. During this 11-month period, billboard companies were allowed to construct 32 new double-decker billboards statewide even though the new regulations prohibited double-decker structures.

Scenic North Carolina has written several letters to State Highway Administrator Bill Marley and former Transportation Secretary Thomas J. Harrelson to ask about progress in implementing the 1990 reforms, but these public officials have never replied. The first such letter was mailed in December 1991.

NCDOT's Record in Implementing the January 1990 Billboard Program Changes

<i>Board of Transportation Recommendation—1-5-90</i>	<i>Actions / Inactions to Date</i>
Adopt new regulations	Regulation changes first adopted on 1-5-90; adopted again on 10-5-90; became effective on 12-1-90; billboard owners allowed to operate under old rules for 11 months
Put out a new Outdoor Advertising Manual	Took more than two years--new manual mailed on 2-19-92
Undertake an extensive training effort	No action
Review and update training annually	No action
Perform a biennial review of the Department's handling of the Outdoor Advertising Control Program	No action
Study the interrelationship of Logo Sign policies and Outdoor Advertising Control policies to look at the possible reduction of the total number of advertising messages	No action

Illegal Tree Cutting Remains a Problem in 1992

A report recently released by the N.C. Department of Transportation says that public trees along highway right-of-ways were illegally destroyed in front of 50 billboards in 1992. The report also says that the state issued permits last year allowing billboard companies to cut down public trees in front of an additional 946 billboards.

In response to this alarming number of illegal tree cuttings, Scenic North Carolina has asked Transportation Secretary Hunt to create an effective program to discourage illegal tree cutting and prosecute those who are guilty of illegal tree cutting.

For example, any billboard company caught illegally cutting trees in South Carolina is not

eligible to receive a permit to construct new billboards from the state for one year. After the third offense, the company is permanently barred from getting new billboard permits.



Illegal cutting on I-26 in Henderson County

Scenic North Carolina has also asked Secretary Hunt to work out an agreement with the Highway Patrol to monitor illegal tree cutting. Troopers would stop and check for cutting permits when they witness someone cutting trees on highway right-of-ways. Most illegal cutting takes place at night and on weekends.

The billboard industry should also support these efforts. In testimony before Congress in April 1990, Outdoor Advertising Association of America (OAAA) President Roland McElroy said, "we are against the unauthorized cutting of vegetation along the highway right-of-way, and we support effective enforcement activity at the state level to prevent these abuses."

Citizens Concerned About Tree Cutting By State

Over the past four months, citizens in Wake and Buncombe counties have expressed concern about unnecessary and unaesthetic over-cutting of trees by state maintenance workers. The incidents, which significantly altered views along portions of major highways, focused attention on the importance of vegetative buffers and tree canopies and the lack of a clear state policy on cutting by maintenance workers.

On US 19-23 north of Asheville, hundreds of locust and pine trees—some 15 to 20 years old—were pruned and cut down in early March by state crews. According to NCDOT, the 40-foot swath of clearing on both sides of the road was necessary to prevent icing on shaded roads and to keep roadsides clear for cars that run off the road. The state apparently has no written policies or standards on this type of cutting, with most decisions left to the discretion of the district engineer.

Alice Sorrells, president of the Asheville Council of Garden Clubs, said in a letter to the *Asheville Citizen-Times*, "While it is recognized that for safety reasons and for good horticultural practices a

certain amount of tree pruning is necessary, it is also important that these activities proceed with proper consideration and supervision so as to assure the correct result. We can only hope that a valuable lesson has been learned . . ."

In another letter, Charlotte Lackey of Asheville wrote, "How much more useful those trees would have been for their beauty, for shading of the road during the warm months—considerably longer than the icing period—and for their ability to absorb the carbon monoxide emitted by vehicles." She suggested that a Visual Pollution Committee be established to review actions that would alter the appearance of public property in Buncombe County.

Susan Roderick, director of the group Quality Forward, told the *Citizen-Times* that the cleared roadsides on US 19-23 ruin an important "scenic corridor" into Asheville and may cause erosion problems.

Ed Ingle, an NCDOT roadside environmental engineer who was not involved in the cutting, said the work did not follow "best horticultural practices" and that NCDOT "could have done that job to be more



On US 19-23 north of Asheville, hundreds of locust and pine trees—some 15 to 20 years old—were cut down in early March by state crews.



In November along I-40 near Raleigh, state crews shredded, ripped, and mangled trees and branches and left the debris on the roadside.



Tree stumps dot this embankment along US 19-23 north of Asheville.



US 19-23 cutting ruined an important "scenic corridor" into Asheville.

e Maintenance Crews

aesthetically pleasing."

On Interstate 40 in the Raleigh area, workers in November pruned and cut hundreds of trees in November and left the debris scattered alongside the road. Raleigh resident Cheryl Braswell asked in her letter to *The News & Observer*, "Why do state workers spend so much effort nurturing the flower beds along the Interstate 40 medians, yet use such poor means of pruning that trunks were recently slashed and branches left shredded, ripped, and mangled?" She added, "The trees are only asking for a little respect."

State Road Maintenance Engineer Frank Pace in Raleigh said that each winter crews use a "motorgrader mower" to cut a swath of vegetation along limited-access roads, focusing especially on vegetation that could grow to block traffic signs.



State crews cut down these trees that the city of Raleigh had planted at a cost of \$20,000 to screen the view of an unattractive scrapyard.

In another incident in Raleigh, state workers in December cut down \$20,000 worth of trees and shrubbery that the city of Raleigh had planted to screen an unattractive scrapyard from the view of motorists. The trees and shrubbery were planted along Hammond Road—one of the city's main gateways—in 1988 and the growth had recently become thick enough to hide the eyesore.

The city of Raleigh had gotten all the necessary clearances and permits before planting the trees. Tim Johnson, a spokesman for NCDOT, told *The News & Observer*, "It was an honest mistake. If the mower had known the trees were approved, obviously he wouldn't have cut them." NCDOT has agreed to use our tax money to pay the costs of replanting the area.

Senator Faircloth Takes Stand Against Billboard Blight

At a Senate hearing on January 13, Senator Lauch Faircloth took a strong stand against billboard clutter along federal highways. At the hearing—held to allow the Senate Environment and Public Works Committee to meet new Transportation Secretary Federico Pena—Faircloth stated his opposition to current policies that allow the construction of billboards in areas that are not truly commercial or industrial in character.

Faircloth began the billboard discussion by asking Pena, "What will be your position, and what are your general thoughts on the proliferation of billboards along Federally funded primary and secondary [roads] and the interstate system? When the Federal government has put money into these highways through the trust fund, what is your feeling on the Federal Government controlling the proliferation of billboards?"

A few moments later, Faircloth said, "You can take a city with a population of several and if the city limits extend to an interstate highway, they have absolute right to declare freedom to erect billboards just as fast as they want to without any control from the Federal Government. So you literally have no control. Once the commissioners of a town of 25 decide they want 50 billboards along the interstate, then they have decided that. They are there in perpetuity. I think it is incumbent that there be some control emanating from a more authoritative source than the local city board."

According to *The News & Observer* (1-21-93), Pena was receptive but non-committal when Faircloth suggested that he should address the problem. Pena agreed that it is helpful to "have some sort of national uniformity." As mayor of Denver, Pena backed billboard restrictions.



This billboard grew out of a cornfield on I-40 near the town of Newton Grove in Sampson County, a few miles from Sen. Lauch Faircloth's home in Clinton. The cornfield is zoned industrial—a classification that allows billboards to be constructed.

Law Fails to Keep Billboards Out of Rural, Scenic Areas

Travelers in North Carolina see billboards that have been constructed in agricultural fields, pasture lands, forested areas, and even on river banks. The photographs on this page illustrate some of these scenes from our state.

The primary purpose of North Carolina's Outdoor Advertising Control Act, passed in 1967, was to stop the construction of new billboards in rural, scenic areas along major highways. The law as implemented has failed to achieve this purpose.

Most of these billboards have been allowed because of loopholes in billboard control regulations. In unzoned areas, for instance, billboards are allowed only in areas where there is at least one business visible from the highway. Obscure businesses in buildings that are barely visible from the highway and not easily recognized as commercial enterprises have been used to permit the erection of hundreds of huge billboards along North Carolina's highways. And if the business closes down, the billboards are allowed to stay forever if they have been in place for two years.

The regulations also allow billboards in areas that are zoned industrial or commercial, even if those areas do not have any actual industrial or commercial use. This loophole has allowed hundreds of billboards to be built in areas that are rural and scenic in character.

Communities sometimes zone undeveloped land along a major

highway as industrial because they anticipate that the land will be needed for that purpose some time in the future. But since there is no requirement that an actual industrial use be present, billboard companies take advantage of this industrial zoning to place signs on rural land.

In other instances, communities have classified areas as commercial or industrial zones that have little potential for actual commercial or industrial development. Consequently, it is difficult to reach any conclusion other than that the land was zoned primarily to allow billboards. On limited-access highways, these zones often consist of narrow strips of land that are located several miles from the nearest exit.

In testimony before Congress in April 1990, Outdoor Advertising Association of America (OAAA) President Roland McElroy said, "we do not support the establishment of special zones carved out of rural environments solely to permit outdoor advertising—so called 'bogus zoning.'"

Scenic North Carolina supports changing the state law to require that land actually be used for a commercial or industrial enterprise visible from the highway—before billboards can be erected. This change would help to prevent the construction of billboards in rural, scenic areas of our state.



In 1991, the town of St. Helena in Pender County rezoned 2900 feet of I-40 highway frontage as industrial; the industrial zone extends only 210 feet back from the highway. Billboards now stand on the site.



This billboard hovers above a residence near the East-West Freeway in Durham. The land was zoned industrial many years ago to accommodate economic expansion, but the area is still primarily residential.



This billboard rises from the floodplain of the Catawba River along Interstate 40 in Catawba County. The land is zoned industrial, but the area is not industrial in character and has little industrial potential.



In unzoned areas, a business must be visible from the highway before billboards can be erected. In this once scenic view from Buncombe County, however, the business cannot be seen, only the billboards.

BILLBOARD EXECUTIVES FINANCE ATTACK ADS ON REP. COLTON

Recently filed campaign finance reports show that billboard company executives and their families paid \$4,700 to run last-minute attack ads against Rep. Marie Colton, D-Buncombe, prior to last November's election.

The attack ads, which urged voters to "Just Say No!" to Marie Colton, were run in newspapers and on radio and cable TV stations in Asheville less than a week before the November election.

Rep. Colton, the Speaker Pro Tempore of the N.C. House of Representatives, has earned a reputation as an effective advocate for controlling billboard blight in North Carolina. In 1991, she helped to defeat a bill that would have prevented local governments from phasing out signs and billboards through amortization.

The billboard company executives who contributed to the attack ads are based in Georgia, Indiana, and three North Carolina cities. The ads were run by a group calling itself "Citizens for Quality Government," which spent a total of \$15,426 on the attack ads.

According to the *Asheville Citizen-Times*, billboard company executive Mike Summey, president of Summey Outdoor Advertising, Inc. in Arden, received \$1000 from the group for fundraising and ad design.

<i>Billboard Exec / Family Member</i>	<i>Company</i>	<i>Amount</i>
W.S. Morris, III and Mary E. Morris Augusta, Georgia	Naegele	\$1500
Dean White Merrillville, Indiana	Whiteco Metrocom	\$1000
Abe Levine and Teresa Levine Atlanta, Georgia	Able	\$1000
Frank Moody Brevard, North Carolina	Able	\$500
W.J. Hogan Lenoir, North Carolina	Appalachian Poster	\$500
Fielding Combs, Jr. Winston-Salem, North Carolina	Associated Poster	\$200

Brunswick, Craven, Lenoir Lead State in New Billboards

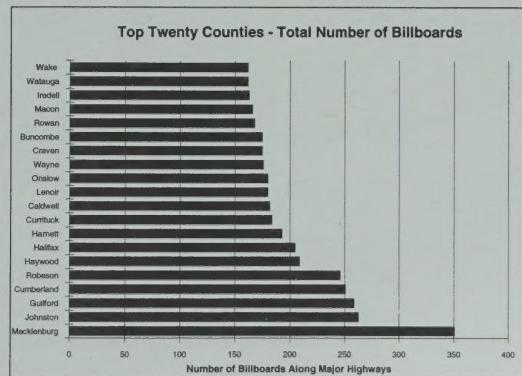
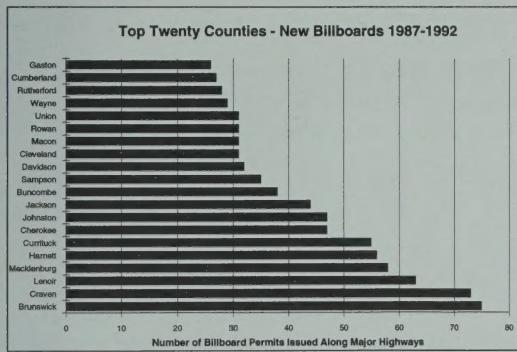
The fertile soils of eastern North Carolina have traditionally supported crops of tobacco, soybean, cotton, and corn, but over the last five years a new crop has been sprouting: billboards.

Scenic North Carolina recently completed a study of new billboards constructed along major highways between January 1987 and January 1992, and found that five of the top six counties for new billboards are in eastern North Carolina.

Brunswick County leads the list with 75 new billboards, while Craven County is second with 73. Lenoir, Mecklenburg, Harnett, and Currituck round out the top six.

The study also ranked the counties of the state in total number of billboards along major highways. Mecklenburg County, criss-crossed by I-85, I-77, and US 74, holds a commanding lead with 351 total billboards. Johnston, Guilford, Cumberland, and Robeson counties round out the top five.

Many county leaders across the state have recognized the need to protect scenic resources and control billboard blight. Commissioners in 54 of the state's 100 counties have adopted billboard control regulations. In general, these regulations control billboards in parts of a county not under the control of a town or city. But in the 20 counties which lead the state in new billboards, only 11 have billboard control ordinances (and many of these were adopted just within the last two years).



Consultant Says Older Billboard Designs Are Flawed

Naegle fined by Labor Department following Winston-Salem death

According to a report in the *Winston-Salem Journal* (12-3-92), Naegle Outdoor Advertising Co. of the Triad was fined \$7,000 by the N.C. Department of Labor for violations related to the collapse of a billboard in Winston-Salem last June that killed a Naegle employee, David S. Pastva.

The citation faults Naegle for not having a written inspection program or inspection forms, and for not requiring inspections of monopole billboards. The 48-foot long, 5-ton billboard that fell on

Pastva was attached to a single pole on one end by 12 bolts.

A consultant for Naegle, Richard Machovek, in a preliminary report on the accident last June, said that the bolts connecting the pole to the sign were too small. He said that many designs for billboards built before 1980 are flawed.

According to the *Winston-Salem Journal* report, Naegle general manager Jimmy Pridgen said the report is "inaccurate" but declined to say why.

Scenic North Carolina Asks Gov. Hunt to Protect Scenic Roadsides

On February 22, Scenic North Carolina gave Governor Jim Hunt a plan for preserving and enhancing the scenic roadsides of the state. The plan, called "A New Vision for North Carolina's Landscapes and Cityscapes," contains 10 major goals and several dozen recommendations.

The plan asks the Governor to jump-start the moribund scenic byways program, develop new ways of providing information to tourists and travelers, and protect the state's countryside by preventing the construction of billboards in rural and scenic areas.

"We are asking Governor Hunt to recognize North Carolina's scenic beauty as a natural resource that needs to be protected," said Dale McKeel of Scenic North Carolina. "Most people—whether tourists or industry scouts—see our state from the roadways, so we've got to make the best impression."

While recognizing that junkyards, litter, and sprawling strip development hurt North Carolina's image, the plan focuses on billboards. "Nothing is destroying our state's distinctive character faster than uncontrolled billboards," said McKeel. "Over the past 15 years, our landscapes and cityscapes have been invaded by monster signs that assault our senses. Let's work to find better ways for businesses to communicate with travelers."

The group stressed the need to tackle these problems immediately. "We are in the midst

of building attractive highways throughout the state," said McKeel. "But the public's extraordinary investment will be squandered if these roads become corridors of clutter. Wildflowers are great, but we need to take additional steps."

"Protecting the scenic environment will require a strong commitment from Governor Jim Hunt, Secretary of Transportation Sam Hunt, and State Highway Administrator Bill Marley," said McKeel. Some of the proposals would require legislation in the General Assembly, while others would require rule changes by the Board of Transportation. Among the actions called for in the plan are the following:

- Use federal transportation enhancement funds to place identification signs and produce tourist information packets for North Carolina's scenic byways, a 1500-mile system of roads that showcases the splendor of the various regions of the state.
- Oppose legislative efforts that would reduce the authority of local officials to phase out nonconforming signs, billboards, and junkyards through amortization. State and federal courts have ruled that amortization is legal if the grace period provides a reasonable time to recoup investment.
- Develop new ways of providing travel and tourism information. These would include travel information centers at rest areas,
- Close loopholes that allow billboards to be constructed along major highways in areas that are not truly commercial or industrial. The billboard control law is supposed to limit billboards to commercial/industrial areas, but billboards are now going up in cornfields, cow pastures, forested areas, and river banks.
- Institute a highway user fee on billboards with the proceeds funding travel information and scenic highway programs. Billboards have value only because they are placed beside publicly financed highways. While motorists and trucking firms pay dearly for their use of the highways, billboards don't pay a dime.
- Ensure that regulations on billboard placement and on the cutting of public trees in front of billboards are effectively and uniformly enforced across the state. There is a need for better training and clear, written operating procedures. NCDOT has still not held the training classes that were recommended by the Board of Transportation over three years ago.

Join Scenic North Carolina . . . Yes, I'm concerned about our scenic environment!

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